

INTRODUCTION TO THE INSPIRED LEARNING MODEL (ILM) TM

Rationale

A new approach to learning is needed for the adult learners who have not been successful in achieving their basic reading and writing goals through approaches to education which focus on the teacher as the primary director of instruction, dispenser of knowledge, and judge of the student's performance. For this reason, many adult literacy programs have adopted a learner-centered approach, which focuses instruction on the learner's stated goals, makes use of the learning styles that best suit the learner, and engages the learner as an active participant in the instructional decision-making and evaluation process. Despite this, learners still may not engage with the learning process to the extent needed to achieve their goals, losing interest or faith in their ability to learn and leaving the program, with yet another experience of failure behind them.

Approach

The Inspired Learning Model TM enhances the learner-centered approach by ensuring a safe and fun learning environment, honoring the learner as an equal partner in the learning process, engaging with the content to be learned in a variety of ways to facilitate mastery, and acknowledging the learner's success, rather than pointing out error. Even when delivered with the most constructive intention, corrections are still a form of criticism and can stifle the learning potential. In the ILM TM, positive acknowledgement replaces criticism. This can be a major paradigm shift for many of us; we invite you to see how it can inspire the learners you work with as well as engage your own love of learning.

The Inspired Learning Model

The underlying principle of the model is that learning takes place when the student is open to learn. For the student to be open to learn, the learning environment needs to be safe. It is primarily the 'teacher' who creates that safety. When it is safe to risk new behaviors, skills or expressions, learning flourishes. Without these safeties, learning stops.

Within every student is a source of inspiration. The student's connection with what most inspires him or her is naturally and easily evoked when he or she perceives the learning environment to be safe. The primary role of the Inspired Learning ModelTM facilitator becomes creating the highest quality of safety in the learning environment.

The model is made up of seven elements, each of which focuses on: "How can a totally safe space be created and maintained to effectively support and honor the learner's connection with what most inspires him or her?"

All seven of the model's elements exist in one form or another in every learning environment today. What makes the ILM TM unique and powerful is how each of these elements is employed, as discussed below:

1. The Facilitator - A facilitator of learning, a subject matter expert, the

acknowledger of progressive mastery. The facilitator's primary focus is asking questions of the learner that evoke self-discovery. The facilitator is much less the provider of content or fountain of knowledge and much more the container and guide for the learner's self-discovery.

2. The Subject Matter - The area of focus organized in a manner that allows constant, positive acknowledgements for observable components or competencies that are pre-articulated. The subject matter is what is being explored. The key is that the facilitator has pre-articulated all the components or competencies of this subject matter's mastery in order to know when to acknowledge the learner. The learner is acknowledged whenever he or she demonstrates or even begins to demonstrate an understanding of one or more of the competencies. The underlying philosophy of the model that is extremely important here is this: what is focused on expands! What the facilitator of learning wants to expand is the inspired learner's abilities, capabilities or understanding of this particular subject matter. It is therefore vital that facilitators know ahead of time what they are looking for or listening for so they, in turn, can acknowledge the inspired learner for getting it right or for being on the road to mastery.

3. The Physical Environment - A safe, comfortable, uninterrupted area or space in which to learn. A safe and comfortable space supports the students and facilitator to carry on the exercises necessary for self-discovery. The environment is free from interruption by all people, media, or events that could sidetrack the physical, intellectual, or emotional exploration that the learner is engaged in. When any observer (parent, manager, administrator, or student-teacher) has a need to observe the class session, a special permission procedure should be honored.

This special permission procedure will include:

- The entire class gives approval, prior to the admittance of the observer or guest.
- The observer agrees to abide by all the guidelines previously agreed to by the class. This is done orally and in front of the class.
- The purpose of the observer's presence is clearly stated.
- The period of time the observer will be present is clearly stated.
- The way in which any information that may be collected will be used is clearly stated.

When the class does not have the power to deny the special permission, they need to be told that this observer is mandatory. Modify the above special 'permission' procedures, as appropriate and then allow each student to choose to participate, or not participate, in the learning activities while this observer is present.

4. The Inspired Learner - The student who is innately wise and primarily responsible for his or her own learning. The inspired learner's role is a very active one. It is the student who takes responsibility for his or her own learning process, with all students honoring their own innate authority to

know what interests them and what most serves them to fully express their life purpose. Do not underestimate the ability of the human spirit, at any age, to know exactly what best serves it!

5. The Guidelines for Accelerated Learning - Ten guidelines that create the way students in the learning group, class, workshop, family, etc., agree to conduct themselves while together in the learning environment. The guidelines help the students and the facilitator understand how they are going to interact during their time together. These guidelines emphasize the honoring of each individual learner to be seen, heard, and acknowledged as magnificent, no matter what! A fundamental guideline primarily established is to have everyone in the class or learning group agree to look for 'what is right' as defined by the subject matter's components and competencies. This creates an atmosphere of celebration and joy that consistently invites further discovery and deeper inquiry by all students.

6. The Integration - A planned and honoring format for experiential repetition of each of the pre-articulated components or competencies of the subject matter until each is learned. The integration element allows for the repetition of practicing, honing and mastering the new subject matter and puts this new learning into the context of each student's life. Little or nothing is mastered after the first exposure to any subject matter. The entire model and philosophy (i.e., acknowledge that which you want to expand within a specific subject matter) is practiced throughout, from initial subject matter exposure to mastery and certification.

7. Inspiration - The magic, the unexplained, the spark of genius - for some, the divine! This element allows openness for inspiration to enter the learning environment. The inspiration element opens the facilitator as well as the student to the unexpected. This element is the unexplained genius that flows through us all, the quiet voice of ancient wisdom. When we are in a safe, quiet and honoring environment, inspiration leaps out of us. Under the conditions of the model, it won't be kept inside.

The components of self-mastery are also explored within this element of the model. Indeed, the model takes a stand for the importance of self-care, self-knowledge and self-love as vital to the facilitators' self-mastery. These components permeate their lives and the learning environments they create. Learners and facilitators alike reap the benefits.

If you would like to learn more about Peter Reding's approach, visit the website for the Foundation for Inspired Learning at www.inspiredlearning.org.

